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Savant of Birdcalls

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Two Poems · *Eric Pankey*

SAVANT OF BIRDCALLS

(Papageno, *The Magic Flute*)

The blue heron's do-si-do,
The barn swallow's wheel, the hawk's

Fell swoop, the kingfisher's fall:
Who but me taught them to dance?

From my roost, I dictate
The show of the peacock's fan—

A gaudy display unfurled
Infrequently with a squawk.

I taunt the owl with my hoot
And shake the crows from the trees.

I, the savant of birdcalls,
Out-mimic the mockingbird.

The cuckoo's wooden coo-coo,
The osprey's exhausted screech

And the cardinal's interval
Are, in my throat, native sound.

Call me duck, dodo, or dove,
Plagiarist or perjurer.

I don't, as the bobwhite does,
Question the truth of my name.